

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1111

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 0722

LIMDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OTRA, SV, NO, SU

SUBJECT: SOVIET WIVES ON SVALBARD

REFS: (A) OSLO 587, (B) OSLO 477, (C) OSLO 303

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND DECIDED LAST WEEK
TO HOLD BACK ON THE EARLIER NORWEGIAN DECISION TO INSIST
THAT SOVIET WIVES ON SVALBARD MOVE PERMANENTLY TO THE
SOVIET COMMUNITY AT BARENTSBERG. INSTEAD HE AS
AGREED TO DISCUSS MATTERS FURTHER WITH THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR AND TO MAKE A TRIP HIMSELF TO SVALBARD.
HE IS HOPEFUL HIS ACTION CAN SOLVE SVALBARD WIVES
AND PERHAPS OTHER PROBLEMS. BUT HE NOW HAS COMMITTED
HIMSELF TO BROADER TALKS ON SVALBARD WITH SOVIETS AND
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IS GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF TAKING A SOFT LINE WHICH

SOVIETS ARE LIKELY TO EXPLOIT. THIS COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO BUCHER-JOHANNESSE, WHO MUST ANXIOUS THIS INFORMATION TO PROTECTED VERY CLOSELY UNTIL AT LEAST WIVES ISSUE IS RESOLVED, FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDEN-LUND MET SOVIET AMBASSADOR FIRICHENKO LAST WEEK (WE BELIEVE FEB 5) AT DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION. KIRICHENKO WAS JUST BACK FROM MOSCOW AND INFORMED FRYDEN-LUND HE WAS GOING BACK AGAIN VERY SOON ON CONSULTATIONS. DURING CONVERSATION THAT ENSUED THEY AGREED THAT IN LIGHT OF SVALBARD PROBLEMS IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THEM TO MEET AND DISCUSS SVALBARD, AMONG OTHER ISSUES, BEFORE AMBASSADOR'S RETURN TO USSR. BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHO ACTUALLY PROPOSED THE MEETING BUT IT EMERGED FROM THE DISCUSSION. KIRICHENKO ASKED FRYDENLUND FOR A BRIEF LIST OF TOPICS THEY SHOULD TAKE UP AND NEXT DAY FRYDENLUND SENT LIST, INCLUDING SVALBARD WIVES AND SOVIET DISREGARD OF REGULATIONS AMONG OTHER SUBJECTS. KIRICHENKO CAME TO FOREIGN MINISTRY ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE FOR BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH FRYDENLUND. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED SVALBARD WIVES CASE, REITERATING AEROFLOT'S CASE (OSLO 0477) AND COMPLAINING ABOUT WAY IN WHICH NORWEGIAN PRESS HAD TREATED MATTER.

2. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION AT MINISTRY, KIRICHENKO SAID HE WOULD RAISE THIS MATTER WHILE HE WAS IN MOSCOW. AT SAME TIME HE GOT FRYDENLUND TO AGREE TO DISCUSS SVALBARD ISSUES GENERALLY LATER WITH SOVIETS. BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN, WHO WAS NOT PRESENT IN CONVERSATION, ADMITTED FRANKLY HE IS NERVOUS ABOUT THIS AGREEMENT ON FURTHER TALKS, LEST THEY GET OUT OF PERSPECTIVE. HE RECOUNTED RECENT CONVERSATION WITH SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR G. F. TITOV (OSLO 587) DURING WHICH TITOV SAID SOVIETS WERE SURPRISED THAT NORWEGIANS ENGAGED IN SVALBARD TALKS WITH UK AND US WHILE THEY REFUSED TO HOLD TALKS WITH SOVIET UNION, WHICH WAS MOST DIRECTLY AFFECTED PARTY IN AREA.

3. IN LIGHT HIS EXCHANGE WITH THE AMBASSADOR, FRYDEN-
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LUND DECIDED TO HOLD BACK THE TELEGRAM WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO BE SENT FROM NORWEGIAN CIVIL AIR DIRECTORATE TO AEROFLOT STATING THE SOVIET WIVES SHOULD BE LOCATED IN SOVIET ENCLAVE OF BARENTSBERG. INSTEAD CIVIL AIR DIRECTORATE IS NOW PRPARING A TELEGRAM, WHICH SHOULD BE SENT LATER THIS WEEK, POINTING OUT THAT THE NOR-WEGIANS DO NOT AGREE WITH THE INTERPRETATIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OUTLINED BY AEROFLOT (OSLO 0477).

THE TELEGRAM WILL NOT PROPOSE ANY ACTION BUT WILL
ONLY SEEK TO OUTLINE NORWEGIAN VIEWS ON AEROFLOT
CABLE.

4. MEANWHILE, FRYDENLUND NOW PLANS TO VISIT SVALBARD FROM FEB 22-26 WITH JUSTICE MINISTER VALLE. VALLE, WHOSE MINISTRY IS TECHNICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SVALBARD, HAD PLANNED TO VISIT SVALBARD LAST DECEMBER, BUT THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN JANUARY CAUSED HER TO DELAY. SHE PLANS TO MEET WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND VISIT LONGYEARBYEN, NY ALESUND, THE MINE SITE AT SVEA AND THE SOVIET COMMUNITY AT BARENTSBURG. FRYDENLUND, BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN AND SEVERAL YET UNNAMED FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WILL JOIN THEM.

5. BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN SAYS SITUATION ON SVALBARD IS GROWING INCREASINGLY UNCOMFORTABLE. THE SOVIET AIRPORT WIVES HAVE RETURNED FROM BARENTSBURG TO LONGYEARBYEN, SUGGESTING THAT THE SOVIETS ARE DIGGING IN ON ISSUE. THE LOCAL NORWEGIAN COMMUNITY, WHILE NOT SO WORRIED ABOUT THE WIVES, IS CONCERNED ABOUT HOW SLOWLY AND INFIRMLY THE MATTER IS BEING HANDLED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

6. WHILE HE DID NOT SAY SO DIRECTLY, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE AND OTHERS ARE CONCERNED BECAUSE (A) THE NORWEGIANS HAVE NOW AGREED TO FURTHER SVALBARD TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS AND (B) CONTRARY TO THEIR EARLIER PLAN THEY HAVE EXCALATED THE WIVES ISSUE FROM THE LEVEL OF AIR OFFICIALS TO A HIGH POLITICAL LEVEL. THE STAKES ARE NOW MUCH GREATER AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISHANDLING MORE SERIOUS. ACCORDING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN, THE NORWEGIANS FEEL THIS IS AN ISSUE ON WHICH THEY CAN NOT BACK DOWN ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE MADE A CONCESSION ON TALKS AND ESCALATED MATTER TO POLITICAL LEVEL. IF KIRICHENKO COMES BACK FROM MOSCOW WITH A HARD LINE, CONFRONTATION IS LIKELY AND COULD HAVE DEFINITE REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

7. FRYDENLUND SEEMS AWARE OF THE IMPLICATIONS TIED TO A POOR SOLUTION OF THE "WIVES" AND RELATED PROBLEMS AS EVIDENCED DURING A CONVERSATION WITH ME WHEN HE REVELAED HIS EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO THE FEB 2 NEWSWEEK SVALBARD ARTICLE, "WHO'S IN CHARGE?".
BYRNE

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